

## 9/08/2009 This Week in Congress

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September 8, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Yesterday, Labor Day honored hard-working Kansans. I am concerned about Kansas workers currently without jobs and those struggling in these difficult times. Congress must address these problems and work to get the economy and U.S. employment back on track.

To celebrate Labor Day this year, I attended the 113th Annual Labor Day Celebration in Hoisington. Thanks to Brian Harrison for participating with me in this year's parade. Thank you also to a few 4th Graders from Lincoln Elementary School who joined me during the parade including: Natalie Froetschner, Lindsey Newman, Hannah Lane, Lindsay Barton and Christi Haberman. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Congress Returns to Session and to the Health Care Debate

As summer winds down and school begins, Congress is gearing to get back into session. I am grateful to have had the August district work period to travel around Kansas to gain further insight into the issues that are affecting our state. The discussions at each town hall I conducted, community I visited, event I attended, and hospital I toured focused on

Kansans' concerns with currently proposed health care legislation and how it will affect American families and businesses. In these conversations, I visited with Kansans about the reasons I am opposed to H.R. 3200, the House Democrats' current health care reform legislation, and why it will adversely affect our nation, our state, and our seniors.

As Congress reconvenes and resumes the debate over reform legislation, I bring with me to this dialogue the knowledge and insight I have gained from the conversations with you over the past month. [Click here to read my latest health care editorials published in Kansas newspapers this summer.](#)

### Honoring Tom Littrell as a United States Military Hero

I attended a surprise ceremony for Tom Littrell of Plainville to honor the bravery and courage he demonstrated during the Vietnam War as an American military soldier. During the war, Tom served as a member of the second platoon of the 919th Combat Engineers attached to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in a combat zone in Southeast Asia. During his tour, he survived several life-threatening injuries from enemy attacks while protecting fellow U.S. soldiers. At the time of his injuries while in combat, Tom continued being active in his day-to-day duties and received medical attention in the field, not in a hospital. One of Tom's platoon members described Tom's job duties as "the most vulnerable a man could routinely do in our unit."

During this surprise ceremony this weekend, I presented Tom a copy of a speech I gave in Congress about his dedication and service. Tom exemplifies the best of those who serve our country - sacrifice, courage and bravery and I thank him for his service. [Click here to read the speech about Tom.](#) [Click here to view a photo from the ceremony.](#)

### Spending Time in Hutchinson

Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka Fall Meeting: On Monday, while in Hutchinson, I spoke to Kansas bankers at the fall meeting of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Topeka, which helps more than 850 community banks in a four state region meet the financing needs of their customers.

I appreciated visiting with more than 130 attendees about the ongoing health care debate, irresponsible government spending and borrowing, increasing FDIC fees and an uncertain regulatory environment.

Thank you to Andy Jetter, President, and Pat Doran, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, for their hospitality. Also thanks to Eric Haar for the kind invitation to attend.

Wesley Towers Retirement Community: Later, I visited Wesley Towers retirement community in Hutchinson to conduct a health care town hall with community residents. Wesley Towers is a continuing care retirement community with over 265 employees that provides service to 330 residents every day. The facility has provided comprehensive health and retirement services to the citizens of Reno County for more than 40 years.

During the town hall, I discussed the current health care legislation and how the bill falls short on resolving health care access problems in rural America. I also talked about the need to strengthen Medicare in order to protect seniors. I appreciated the opportunity to answer questions from residents about other topics including: Social Security, our burdensome national debt, the increasing influence of government czars and No Child Left Behind.

Thank you to Ray Vernon, President and CEO, for the chance to join him and the residents at Wesley Towers. [Click here](#) to view a photo from the event.

**Hutchinson Rotary Club:** I attended the Hutchinson Rotary Club meeting where I had the chance to give brief greetings to the members. As a fellow Rotarian, I always like the chance to meet with other Rotarians. I enjoyed hearing from keynote speaker Amy Blankenbiller, President of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, about how the Chamber is working to achieve its goal of making Kansas the best place in America to do business. Kansans share a desire to make the places we call home better and civic clubs like Rotary help make this happen. Thanks to Jim Gilliland for the opportunity to be his guest.

**Community-Based Outpatient Clinic:** I visited the Veterans Affairs (VA) Community-Based Outpatient Clinic that provides routine health care, laboratory work, radiological views, prescription services and mental health services to veterans in the Hutchinson area. This clinic is an extension of the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center in Wichita, which provides care to 30,000 veterans in 59 Kansas counties. As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I know that access to health care is one of the most important issues veterans face in Kansas. I appreciated the opportunity to talk with staff members and several veterans at the clinic during my visit.

**Reins of Hope:** I was offered the invitation to visit Reins of Hope to learn about the work this non-profit organization does to help Kansans with developmental disabilities. Created in 1995, Reins of Hope, near Hutchinson, encourages their riders to reach their own personal potential by providing therapeutic horse riding programs. During my visit, I learned that Reins of Hope will host its 3rd Annual Benefit on October 31, 2009, at 6 pm at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. I thanked the folks at Reins of Hope for the work they do to improve the lives of children and adults and offered my assistance in Washington to make sure disabled Kansans are able to get the support they need.

Thank you to Jane Harder, Director of Reins of Hope, for her hospitality, and to her son, Brandon Harder, a K-State student from Haven, who was able to ride along with me on my Hutchinson visits. Also thank you to Reins of Hope volunteers Jim Keever and Barb and Eldon Gray; and to several members of the Board of Directors including Maurice Cummings, Elwin Cabbage and Del Metcalf.

## Meeting with Business and Community Leaders

Johnson County Business Leadership Council: On Wednesday, I joined business and community leaders for the Greater Kansas City Chamber Johnson County Business Leadership Council meeting in Mission. I visited with folks about health care legislation, the growing national debt and the increasing role of government in private business. Creating economic opportunity for Kansans is a goal we all share. It is more important than ever in these economic times that we discuss ways to bring businesses and jobs to our state.

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce: On Thursday, I enjoyed visiting with the Federal Affairs Committee of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. The Kansas City Chamber provides leadership opportunities to its members to fulfill its mission to build a better community. The Chamber works to improve transportation and infrastructure, promote international trade and work cooperatively across the state line. I appreciated the chance to discuss transportation and infrastructure, bioscience, deficit spending, education, energy and small business issues with committee members.

Thank you to Cathy Bennett, Director of Government Relations, for inviting me to speak, and to Clyde McQueen, Chair of the Federal Affairs Committee, for his kind introduction. Also thanks to members of the Federal Affairs Committee, Board of Directors and Public Policy Council.

Speaking with Leavenworth Lions Club: Later on Thursday, I joined the Leavenworth Lions Club to talk with members about the economy and other current issues. Citizen involvement in civic clubs, such as the Lions Club, helps keep our communities in Kansas strong. Established in 1951, the Leavenworth Lions Club is the largest Lions Club in Kansas. As a member of the Hays Lions Club, I always enjoy visiting other clubs in Kansas to learn about issues important to that community.

I enjoyed speaking with local Lions Club members and appreciated the hospitality of the club members and to John Havens, Club President. Also thank you to Nancy Bauder, Club 2nd Vice President, for introducing me.

#### Attending Fort Hays State University Foundation Meeting

I serve on the Fort Hays State University (FHSU) Foundation Board of Trustees and attended a foundation meeting on Saturday. Each year, the foundation helps make a college education a reality for young people by distributing approximately \$1.4 million in scholarships. Every Kansas student should have the right to a quality education, and I will continue to do what I can to support educational opportunities. I enjoyed meeting with the other board members and President and CEO Tim Chapman. Thank you to Board of Trustees Chairman, John Tomlinson, and to FHSU President, Dr. Edward Hammond.

#### Meeting to Discuss Health Care in Larned

I visited Larned on Friday for a meeting with the staff of Hays Medical Center regarding the closure of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital. Catholic Health Initiatives has announced plans to close St. Joe's in Larned on September 30, 2009. The closure of the hospital will adversely affect Larned residents' access to critical health care services, especially 24-hour emergency services. I recognize that access to health care is essential for rural communities to survive and have worked to find a solution for the Larned community. Hays Medical Center recently agreed to partner with the Pawnee County Community Health Organization to establish a temporary emergency and outpatient services facility to provide health care to Larned and the surrounding community. I was glad to meet with the medical staff of Hays Medical Center to learn more about this partnership.

## Listening Tour Continues

On Friday, I held town halls in Stafford and Pratt counties. During each of these town halls, I had the opportunity to speak about the increasing national debt, immigration, No Child Left Behind, irresponsible government spending and my opposition to Cap and Trade legislation. [Click here](#) to view the listening tour schedule and the areas I have stopped this year. [Click here](#) to view photos from my recent town hall meetings.

## Attending 75th Birthday Open House in Hays

I celebrated Donald Gottschalk and Leon Gottschalk's 75th birthdays at an open house on Sunday. Donald and Leon have been good family friends for many years. I was glad to be able to celebrate the occasion that day with both of them and their families. The celebration was a good one and I thank each of them for their friendship.

## In the Office

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including John and Becky Pyle of Hays; Brent, Laura, Dillon, Hannah and Hayley Engelland of Hutchinson; Jennifer Ebert of Frankfort; and Philisha Stallbaumer of Centralia.

Very truly yours,

Jerry